



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Sawtooth National Forest
Ketchum, Ranger District

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Date: June 1, 2015

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2015 Annual Operating Instructions

For Lava Lake Land and Livestock, LLC and Muldoon Grazing Association

Sheep and Goat Allotments

Administered by

The Ketchum Ranger District

Sawtooth National Forest

Permit # 03033, 03034, 03035; 03009

Prepared and Recommended by: Bill Whitaker, Range Management Technician

Approved by:


District Ranger

June 1, 2015

Date



Annual Operating Instructions 2015

INTRODUCTION

Two entities, Lava Lake Land and Livestock LLC (Lava Lake), and the Muldoon Grazing Association (MGA) graze domestic sheep on eight allotments on the Sawtooth National Forest. These allotments include: North Fork-Boulder S&G, Buckhorn S&G, Trail Creek S&G, Cove Creek S&G, and Garfield S&G, permitted to Lava Lake. Copper Creek S&G, Pot Creek S&G, and Muldoon S&G, are permitted to MGA.

Permitted Numbers and Seasons: Muldoon Grazing Association

Numbers	Season; Head Months (HM)	Allotment	Head Months
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 827 head months. Not to exceed 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs). Dry bands will not exceed 1500 sheep.	6/9-9/30	Muldoon S&G	827
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 2730 head months. Not to exceed 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs) Dry bands will not exceed 1500 sheep.	6/9-9/30	Copper Creek S&G	2730
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 867 head months. Not to exceed 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs). Dry bands will not exceed 1500 sheep.	6/9-9/30	Pot Creek S&G	867

Permitted Numbers and Seasons: Lava Lake Land and Livestock LLC

Numbers	Season	Allotment	Head Months
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 3518 head months. Not to exceed 1000 ewe's with lambs or 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs) or 1000 dry ewes. 1 horse	6/01-9/30	North Fork-Boulder S&G	3518
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 1775 head months. Not to exceed 1200 ewe's with lambs or 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs) or 1500 dry ewes.	6/09-9/30	Buckhorn S&G	1775
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 986 head months. Not to exceed 1250 ewes with lambs or 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs), or 1500 dry ewes. 1 horse	6/05-9/30	Trail Creek S&G	986
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 986 head months. Not to exceed 1250 ewes with lambs or 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs), or 1500 dry ewes. 1 horse	6/01-9/30	Cove Creek S&G	2109

Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 1999 head months. Not to exceed 1250 ewes with lambs or 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs), or 1500 dry ewes.	6/09-9/30	Garfield S&G	1999
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Authorized Season of Use and Numbers

Muldoon Grazing Association

Numbers	Season	Allotment	Head Months
800 ewe (bd. #1) 1 horse	9/15-9/30 9/15-9/30	Copper Creek*	421
Non-use resource protection		Pot Creek S&G	
800 ewe 1 horse	8/31-9/4 8/1-9/4	Muldoon S&G*	132

Lava Lake Land and Livestock LLC

Numbers/Herder	Season	Allotment	Head Months
Will be used under a temporary authorization to Plateau Farms LLC		North Fork-Boulder S&G	
rest		Trail Creek S&G	

822 ewe/lamb (bd. #1)	7/7-8/10	Cove Creek S&G	945
800 ewe 1 horse (Mario Vilchez)	8/11-8/18 7/7-8/18		<u>210</u> 1145 total
Non-use resource protection (lack adequate water)		Buckhorn S&G	
800 ewe (band #1) 1 horse (Mario Vilchez)	9/5-9/14 9/5-9/14	Garfield*	263

*The season of use shown for the Copper Creek, Muldoon, and Garfield allotments are for billing purposes only, these allotments may be used concurrently as described in the routing instructions below.

BILLING

Confirmation of payment of fees through the Lock Box in San Francisco must be received prior to livestock entering the allotment.

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Emphasis will be placed upon once-over light use while grazing the band on the allotments. Carefully review with your herders the **Terms and Conditions** section of this document which contains specific management standards, guidelines, terms, conditions and practices found in the Amended 2012 Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as well as your Term Grazing Permit.

Specific instructions or management actions such as routing, or areas to avoid for example will be found in the sections of this AOI specific to the allotment or allotments and the band that uses it.

Reminder: All livestock feed or straw brought on to the Forest is to be certified noxious weed free.

COVE CREEK ALLOTMENT

On approximately 7/7 a band of 822 ewes with lambs will enter the allotment in the upper portions of the Driveway Gulch drainage from the adjoining BLM Indian Creek allotment. The lamb band will graze southerly thru the upper portions of Driveway Gulch, Fowler Creek, Moran Creek and Cabin Creek to the "Narrows" (headwaters of Cove Creek). After grazing the Upper portions of Cabin Creek and the "Narrows" to standard the band will graze northerly across the upper portions of Big Witch Creek to Finley Gulch. The band will ship at the corrals on approximately 8/10. After shipping an 800 head dry band will graze the lower un-grazed portions of Big Witch Creek, Cabin Creek, Fowler Gulch and Moran Creek from approximately 8/11-8/18. The band will leave the Forest on 8/18 by trailing through Cabin Creek and the "Narrows."

- **In order to reduce use in Cabin Creek, Moran Creek, and Fowler Gulch drainages the lamb band may use portions of the Cove Creek allotment north and east of Cove Creek (Finley Gulch and Big Witch Creek area) that will not be used by the dry band this year.**
- **The early seral condition of the lower portion of Cove Creek is a major resource concern on this allotment. The Cove Creek riparian area below the junctions of Fowler and Finley Gulch will continue to be rested. Continue to avoid this area as much as possible, as you have been doing since 2002.**

- **Although grazing plans for this year have not yet been completed with Flat Top Sheep Company (Flat Top) we will likely be authorizing trailing by Flat Top across the Cove Creek allotment in the spring and fall as we have done in the past few seasons. We will restrict trailing to one day at the beginning of the season and one day at the end of the grazing season. Trailing will be restricted to the road as much as possible. Please co-ordinate with Flat Top Sheep Company to avoid mixing the bands. We will be monitoring the effects that the trailing may have on the Cove Creek riparian area.**
- **We will continue to implement the monitoring plan described in the Cove Creek Allotment NEPA Decision and the Allotment Management Plan. We will work closely with you as plots are established and the monitoring plan is implemented.**

Buckhorn/Copper Creek/Garfield/Muldoon Allotments

It was observed last year that upland streams and springs were dry or nearly so in many areas on the Buckhorn allotment due to the low snowpack and dry spring conditions. Last winter the snow pack was similar if not worse than the previous year and will likely affect the availability of water on the allotment again. Due to the continued low water conditions non-use for resource protection is authorized again this year for the Buckhorn allotment.

The Copper Creek, Muldoon, and Garfield allotments will be used together by a band of 800 dry ewes (band #1) this year. Using these allotments together will provide flexibility in the management of these allotments and facilitate implementation of grazing standards such as "once over grazing". Management will emphasize "once over" grazing standards rather than specific periods of time on each allotment.

On approximately 8/31, an 800 head dry band will enter the Forest on the Muldoon allotment. The band will primarily graze the lower Muldoon Creek portion of the allotment. If needed the band may also use the Argosy Creek portion of this allotment. On 9/5 the band will enter the Garfield allotment near Deep Gulch. The band will graze northerly on the east side of Copper Creek (Garfield allotment) in a northerly direction to Frisco Gulch. The band will leave the Garfield allotment on approximately on 9/15 and enter the Copper Creek allotment near Mormon Gulch and Blackspar Canyon. An alternative route would be to enter the Copper Creek allotment in the headwaters portion of Copper Creek and Deadman Gulch. The band will then graze the Copper Creek allotment from 9/15-9/30 following "once over" grazing practices. The band will leave the Forest on 9/30.

- **The Rawson Creek portion of the Rawson/Deadman Unit on the Copper Creek allotment is closed to grazing (reference the allotment map).**
- **We will post the Mormon Hill trailhead and the trough area this year informing the public that sheep will be grazing near the trailhead and using the trough. The area immediately adjacent to the trough will be closed to the public for dispersed camping and motorized vehicles.**

- **The Little Copper Creek drainage is closed to grazing except that portion which needs to be crossed in the lowermost portions of the drainage (reference the allotment map).**
- **The sheep should be routed to avoid the steep slopes immediately adjacent to the riparian areas above the benches in Mutual and Boundary Gulch.**
- **The campground in Copper Creek and the area around Garfield Guard station are to be avoided.**
- **Please be sure to inform your herder that the upper portions of the Muldoon allotment is closed to grazing (reference allotment map).**
- **Prescribed fire is planned in the Little Wood River drainage again this year in the Slide Canyon area. We will keep you informed as plans are finalized and during the implementation period so that any adjustments to grazing by your bands can be anticipated.**
- **Exploratory core drilling activities may begin this year in the Deep Gulch drainage on the Garfield allotment. Please inform your herder of this activity and avoid having sheep in the immediate vicinity of any active mining activity, road construction or reclamation activities that may occur in this area as a result of this project.**

COMPLIANCE

This AOI is made part of your grazing permit consistent with Part 1, item 3 and Part 2, Item 8(a). **Procedures for modifying this AOI:** Situations may develop during the grazing season which requires changes to these instructions. If this becomes necessary, or if you cannot comply with some part of these instructions, contact the District Ranger and obtain approval before initiating changes or deviating from these instructions.

REPORTING

The permittee is required to provide timely and complete actual use information to the Forest Officer in charge upon request. Use of calendars, maps, or actual use forms provided will be utilized to record dates for turning out, shipping, leaving the allotment, as well as location and number of days of use of each camp and or prominent drainage(those identified on maps)

We need to know dates of entry into each new allotment or major drainage, noteworthy change in sheep numbers, occupied camp or band locations with dates of occupancy, periods, of use within specific drainages, and maintenance of range facilities. Please notify us of significant losses, from predators or poisonous plants, herding problems (logistical or due to unforeseen circumstances), conflicts with other Forest users, and any other grazing related information you feel is worth reporting.

Weekly reporting for trail information updates will suffice as actual use reporting with the addition of any notable changes in numbers of mature sheep. Not reporting to my range staff: (1) weekly sheep locations; and (2) intended routing patterns could prompt non-compliance procedures. Please phone my range staff Bill Whitaker (208-622-0080) or otherwise provide this information no later than Wednesday noon of each week. If my range staff is not available leave the information on his phone, e-mail, or provide written information to the front desk personnel at the Ketchum District office.

INSPECTIONS AND MONITORING

Inspections will be made within each allotment to monitor grazing use and insure compliance with the direction set forth within the AOI. Standard monitoring will include visual inspections, compliance with AOI and grazing standards, photo points, and rapid assessments to estimate use and ground cover.

Monitoring as identified in the North Fork-Boulder, Trail Creek, and Cove Creek Allotment Management Plans will continue or be implemented. Your input and participation regarding this aspect of grazing management would be appreciated. My range staff will be contacting you as schedules are developed. We will be re-reading the nested frequency and riparian (MIM) plots established on the North Fork-Boulder allotment this year.

COOPERATION

Once again this year we will work in partnership with Blaine County, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game, the Defenders of Wildlife, and the Lava Lake Institute in fostering a non-lethal approach to preventing domestic sheep and wolf mortality. Brian Bean (208-788-1710) representing Lava Lake Institute will be the primary coordinator and contact person concerning this program. Emphasis will be on the Ketchum Ranger District, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and other areas within Blaine County south of Galena Summit. Coordination will be important. Adjustments can be made to routing or bedding as the need arises, to head off problems. Meetings will be scheduled as necessary to assess how things are going or prevent potential problems.

Questions about what can or cannot be done in reference to defending flocks, harassing wolves, or shooting wolves should be directed to Toby Boudreau at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Regional Office in Jerome, Idaho (208-324-4359) or Jim Hayden at the Fish and Game office in Boise, Idaho (208-334-3700); Todd Grimm, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services in Boise, Idaho (208-373-1630); Todd Sullivan USDA Aphis Wildlife Services Eastern District Supervisor (208-236-6921); or local Wildlife Service's contacts. Permittee's should continue working with their local Wildlife Services representative on depredation issues.

In order to reduce the potential for depredation, the Forest Service recommends that the following procedures be implemented each grazing season: *Keep camp meat in coolers, and not hung.*

- *Burn, bury, or pack out food leftovers, bones, garbage etc. including food not consumed by dogs accompanying the herders.*
- *Bury or remove sheep and saddle stock carcasses from the area where they will not serve as an attractant to predators. The intent of this recommendation is not to require removal of carcasses from the allotment, but to remove them out of areas currently being grazed or areas soon to be grazed.*
- *Work with Defenders field staff, IDF&G and Wildlife Services in implementing other effective preventative actions to reduce the risk of depredation.*

Contact the range staff at the Ketchum Ranger District (208-622-0080) for local wildlife service's contact information.

Lava Lake, Muldoon Grazing Association and Idaho Department of Fish & Game have developed a strategy, "Best Management Practices for Separation between Domestic Sheep and Bighorn Sheep" (updated June 2011) to reduce the potential for contact between wild sheep and domestic sheep. Herders will actively search for bighorn sheep, using binoculars or spotting scopes while tending the sheep bands in areas of increased potential for contact. If any bighorn sheep are observed, the herder will follow established protocol identified in the "Separation Strategy" to contact Lava Lake's central office as quickly as possible, to relay information to the BHS Area Coordinator, (ID&FG – Jerome). We also require that the herder make the appropriate contact with the Forest Service or Idaho Department of Fish & Game when a Bighorn Sheep sighting is reported on or within a minimum of one mile of the Cove Creek, Muldoon, Buckhorn, Garfield, and Copper Creek allotments. An appropriate response will be coordinated among the cooperating parties.

The herder will need to be attentive with the sheep and guard dogs to reduce conflicts especially when in close proximity to system trails or roads. The trailheads and major trails will be posted informing the public that sheep are in the area. The herder will be given additional signs that will be moved with the sheep and placed at strategic locations more proximal to the sheep in order to inform the public of the presence of sheep and guard dogs.

We are again requiring that you provide weekly updates on sheep band locations to Bill Whitaker by Wednesday noon so that we are able to update the weekly on-line recreation trail report. This trail report along with signing to inform the public that sheep are in the area has proven successful in preventing conflicts with recreational use of the trails.

As discussed at this year's meeting we will plan on placing a GPS collar on one band this year. Tentatively we would like to collar band #1 which will graze the Cove Creek allotment and allotments within the Little Wood River drainage. The collar will remain on the sheep through the grazing season.

As previously discussed in this AOI we will coordinate closely with you concerning prescribed fire activities in the upper Little Wood River drainage so that your grazing operation is impacted

as little as possible. This AOI may be modified such as timing of grazing and routing in order to accommodate both implementation of this year's prescribed fire activities and your grazing operation.

DROUGHT

This season is shaping up to be a very dry year with below average precipitation. Drought conditions will be monitored as the season progresses. Grazing will be managed on an allotment by allotment basis focusing on water availability and soil disturbance. This year's water content in the snowpack is well below average and dry spring conditions are a concern. Due to low water content in the snowpack and dry conditions the possibility of livestock leaving the allotments early this year for resource protection is a possibility. We recommend planning for this possibility.

Non-use for resource protection is authorized again this year for the Buckhorn allotment due to this year's low snowpack. The low snowpack will likely lower water tables and create conditions similar to what occurred last grazing season which resulted in crucial springs and streams drying up altogether or not producing adequate water for domestic livestock on this allotment.

The low snowpack and overall warmer conditions this winter and spring has resulted in early spring conditions and may increase the possibility of wildfire again this year. Consequently implementation of fire restrictions will be likely and we will notify you if restrictions are put in effect.

Terms and Conditions for Sheep Grazing

Following are the Forest Plan standards, guidelines and Grazing Permit terms, conditions and practices applicable to sheep grazing that must be followed while grazing on the Ketchum Ranger District.

These permit standards, guidelines, terms and conditions are needed to move toward or to achieve the desired conditions, goals, and objectives for vegetation, wildlife, fish, riparian, soil and water resources described by the Sawtooth Forest Land & Resource Management Plan. Other than Guidelines, the following Terms & Conditions are binding limitations placed on management actions. Guidelines represent preferred or advisable courses of action that are generally expected to be carried out.

Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines:

- Only one night/one time use of bed grounds is allowed. (standard).
- Only open or loose sheep herding will be practiced except where site-specific vegetation management (e.g., noxious weed control or reforestation) is needed. (standard)

- Only annual once-over sheep grazing will be allowed, with the exception of designated sheep driveways, travel routes, or where specifically authorized. (standard)
- Livestock salting will be prohibited in RCA's (riparian conservation areas). Sheep will be salted only at bed grounds. Salt will be placed in containers and moved with the sheep. Tarps and hollowed logs meet the criteria for salting in containers. (standard)
- Only certified noxious weed-free hay, straw, or feed is allowed on National Forest Systems lands. (standard)
- Earth-disturbing equipment used on National Forest System lands- such as cats, graders, and front-loaders- shall be cleaned to remove all visible plant parts, dirt, and material that may carry noxious weed seeds. Cleaning shall occur prior to entry onto the project area and again upon leaving the project area, if the project area has noxious weed infestations. (standard)
- New, reconstructed, or replaced livestock water developments must provide access and escape to and from water for all types of wildlife. (standard, reference part Three of the Term Grazing Permit under maintenance of structural range improvements)
- On all lands outside of designated travelways, motorized use shall be prohibited unless otherwise authorized. (standard)
- Damage to or loss of Forest System trails from timber harvest, livestock grazing, road construction, mining, special uses, and prescribed fire activities should be repaired or mitigated by the appropriate party. (guideline)
- Sheep should be routed to avoid slopes with loose soil conditions, active gullies, and snowbank areas that have low productivity, soil puddling, and compaction conditions. (guideline, generally site specific in the AOI)

SHEEP HERDING:

1. The permittee or herd manager will provide sufficient riders or herders to obtain proper distribution, protection, and management of sheep on the allotment as required by the Rangeland Project Decision (RPD)/Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and/or the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI).
2. Do not allow sheep to be shaded or bedded within 100 yards of all streams. If this is not reasonable due to topography ensure that the sheep are as far back as possible from the streambank.
3. Graze no closer than 200 yards from all lakes or ponds specified as closed to sheep grazing in Part 3 or your Term Grazing Permit. This may not apply on all allotments. Check Part 3 on your Term Grazing Permit.
4. Do not bed sheep within 200 yards of designated campgrounds, trails, trail heads, or maintained roads.
5. Graze rather than trail to water, and water at different locations each time.

6. The permittee is required to provide a copy of the Annual Operating Instructions to each herder, and to ensure each herder understands the written contents.

OTHER

7. Permittees are responsible for cleaning or repairing system roads and trails damaged by sheep to the condition existing prior to trailing. Immediate action is required. (standard)
8. All predator control will be in accordance with the approved Predator Control Plan and Federal and State laws and regulations.
9. Promptly remove or bury any sheep that have died within 100 yards or in sight of administrative sites, system roads or trails, corrals or sources of water.
10. Before and after shipping, sheep will not be allowed to graze, shade, or bed within one-quarter mile of the corral. Exception: After leaving the corral, the sheep will be allowed to water one time before departing the immediate area.
11. Control guard dogs when other Forest users or pets are near by.

SHEEP CAMPS

12. Each camp will be kept clean. All litter and unburned material from fire pits will be hauled away and disposed of off-Forest. Human waste must be buried if it is within 150 feet from water. The use of detergent in streams is prohibited.
13. Only existing herder camps are approved for use. New camp locations must be approved by a Forest Service officer.
14. Camps will be kept in primitive condition. No improvements will be allowed. If a new fire pit is constructed, dismantled it and restore the area before moving your camp.
15. Herder camp use will not exceed 5 days per location unless prior permission is obtained from a Forest officer. Camps should be located to avoid conflict with other Forest users
16. At camp, pack and saddle stock will be high-lined, picketed or hobbled. Tying pack or saddle stock to trees at camp is prohibited.
17. Holding pens, corrals, or mangers used for riding stock will be cleaned up when camp is moved.

FIRE

18. Employees must be kept informed of the current fire danger, situation, and the permittee's fire prevention responsibility. The Forest Service will advise the permittee when special fire restrictions become effective.
19. Exhaust from camp stoves must be filtered through a spark arrestor screen with 3/8 inch (or smaller) mesh.
20. Never leave campfires unattended.
21. Possession of an adequate shovel and bucket for fire control is required at camps.

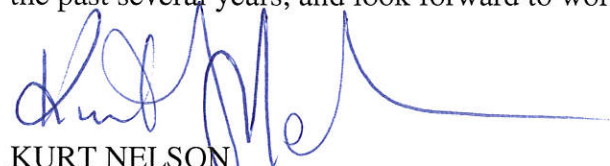
WOLF Guidelines

- 22. The permittee will be contacted immediately when the district becomes aware of wolves in an area. Possible re-routing of the band may be agreed on between the permittee and the District Ranger.**
- 23. At camp, meat will be kept in containers to avoid attracting wolves.**
- 24. Food wastes will be burned, buried, or packed out with other camp refuse.**
- 25. Preventive measures should be coordinated with Idaho Fish and Game.**
- 26. Only bed sheep down for one night per bed ground under normal circumstances. When there is wolf activity in the area and fladry is used to minimize predation, bed grounds may be used for more than one night. If this situation occurs bed ground site selection needs to be discussed with the Range Management Specialist for this allotment.**

IMPROVEMENTS

27. The permittee is responsible for the maintenance of structural range improvements as delineated on Part 3 of your Term grazing Permit. These improvements will be maintained prior to placing sheep on the allotment. Please refer to your permit for the specific maintenance standards for structural range improvements.

We really appreciate your cooperation and willingness to work with us on resource issues over the past several years, and look forward to working with you this season.



KURT NELSON
District Ranger

Enclosure: (allotment maps attached)

